

Before I begin, I need to say something about last the last 2 weeks' sermons. More than one person has pointed out to me that my tone in those sermons was less than gracious, and that my arguments came off as belittling and mocking those who hold the old earth view.

I want you to know that I realize a number of you believe in an old earth, and that I treasure you as brothers and sisters in Christ, and I have an exceedingly high regard for you and I recognize and appreciate your high level of devotion and commitment to God's Word.

I acknowledge that there are many excellent servants of Christ – many who would far outshine me in my level of knowledge and devotion - who believe in an old earth.

I preached what I preached because I believe it to be what Scripture teaches. I preached it strongly, because I believe it to be important. But it was not necessary for me to have a mocking kind of a tone in doing so.

I think I probably unfairly lumped too broad a group together, and I want to apologize and ask those of you whom I offended to please forgive me.

There is no question that there are young earth scientists who want so desperately to believe in a young earth that they fudge on their interpretations of science.

And there are old earth Christians who want so much to maintain a belief in old earth that they fudge on the interpretation of the Bible. In Sunday school we have been talking about what to do when you have a conflict like that without losing your integrity either way.

To maintain our integrity, those who believe in a young earth, when we approach science, should say: "Is it possible that anyone would arrive at my view other than people who start out really wanting it to believe in a young earth – without being biased by what I believe from Scripture?"

If not, it's probably an invalid scientific conclusion. I have to admit, by applying that question over the last few weeks, I have had to drop some beliefs I had about science that are not really supported very well.

On the other hand, I would hope that we would all ask that same question about Scripture. Whatever you believe about Genesis, you should ask, "Would anyone arrive at this interpretation who wasn't motivated to do so by their beliefs from science?"

Just as scientific beliefs should arise from that data itself, so our interpretations of the Bible must arise from the biblical text itself.

There have been some who would like me to address the scientific debate between the old earth scientists and the young earth scientists. But I am not going to, because I'm not qualified. The whole discussion is over my head.

All I'll say is this: if you still struggle with this, perhaps it would help if you thought in terms of another act of creation besides the creation of the heavens and the earth.

Jesus gives us several to choose from - for example when He turned water to wine.

What role could science play in analyzing that miracle? If the wine were sent to the lab, how old would the scientist at the lab say the wine was?

He would make judgments based on established scientific facts on how long it takes for wine to ferment, how long it takes grapes to grow and mature, etc.

They could probably even offer solid evidence for what region of the world the grapes were grown in, the amount of rainfall there was the year they were grown, etc.

Would any of that be helpful in understanding the origin of that wine? No. Even though the methods the scientists used may be perfectly valid in normal circumstances, the conclusions would be misleading in the case of a miracle of creation.

So is there a tension between John 4 and science? There is a tension between John 4 and pure naturalism. But since all science can do is make observations about the way things naturally progress, it doesn't really have anything to say about instances of miraculous divine activity.

So I'm not going to become embroiled in a debate about the configuration of starlight or the molecular makeup of rocks at the time of creation any more than I'm interested in debating about the chemical properties of the wine Jesus created for the wedding –

- except to say this: The only real threat to my belief system is if it *can* be explained naturally.

Some Christians seem to feel threatened at the prospect that the divine activity described in Gn.1 can't be explained naturalistically.

But I would hope that it couldn't. It would be a major problem for me if scientists found a naturalistic explanation for how water could be instantly turned to wine, a man could walk on water or feed tens of thousands with one kid's lunch, or rise from the dead.

That would be a problem for me, because the very fact that those things can't be explained naturalistically, and yet still happened, are the very reason why I'm convinced Jesus was God in human flesh just as He claimed.

Since science observes the way God designed the natural order, it doesn't really have anything to say about the time when God acts supernaturally.

Is that position opposed to science or sound reason? No. In fact, it seems to me to be consistent with what scientists have found in examining our world.

If God created a beautiful world that was functionally mature, then you would expect things to appear to have varying ages – the sapling would look young, the big oak tree would look old, the canyon would look very old, the starlight would appear older still, etc.

So is the creation model consistent with what scientists have found? If the young earth view were true, what would we expect scientists to find? We would expect that depending upon what they were measuring, they would discover various different "ages" for the earth.

Some methods would yield a very old age, others a much younger age, etc.

From what I understand, that's exactly what we find. That doesn't prove the young earth creation, but the data are consistent with it.

On the other hand, if the earth were created in a primitive form and all that we see developed naturally from that point, we would expect all the dating methods to point to the same apparent age.

So let's move on.

In the beginning

Implies an end (the word "beginning" often appears with the word "end")

The ancient belief (which persists today in many places) was that time is cyclical, progressing forever without beginning or end.

Scripture makes it clear, however, that this world is not a cyclical existence or an endless progression of years upon years that meander through endless time without direction or purpose.

The universe is an intentional project that was begun at a certain point for a reason, and it is being carried to a purposeful conclusion.

If you could somehow draw a line from Gn.1:1 to Rev.5:13, those two verses give you a great understanding of the whole Bible, the purpose of the creation, and an idea of where it's all going.

The next time someone asks, "Why am I here?" you can just point him to these two verses:

Gn.1:1 In the beginning God created absolutely everything.

Rev.5:13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and

glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Everything in between Gn.1:1 and Rev.5:13 you can put in a big parentheses.

God made everything in the beginning, and from then on began working to bring about what takes place at the end.

The “times” and eras of human history do have a fulfillment

Eph.1:9-10 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment-to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

There is a purpose to it all.

Php.2:9-11 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In order for God the Father to bring all of heaven and earth to worship the Son, He first had to make heaven and earth.

And that’s why Col.1:20 points out that once man rebelled and brought upon himself and the whole creation the curse, God was so concerned **to reconcile to Himself all things in heaven and on earth.**

God created the heavens & the earth.

God

Elohim The plural for *El*. But it’s not translated as a plural, because all the verbs and pronouns are singular. Lit: **“In he beginning, Gods, He created the heavens and the earth...”**

Either it’s the plural of majesty, or it’s just a word that is plural in form but singular in meaning.

We discover later that God is a plurality within a unity, and that idea is unfolded in the New Testament so we understand that there is one God revealed in three distinct persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The role of God the Son in the creation was very pronounced.

Jn.1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Heb.1:8-11 about the Son [God] says...10 "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. 11 They will perish, but you remain

the heavens and the earth.

This is a merism (mention 2 extremes to include everything in-between). “I worked day and night”

You could translate it this way: “In the beginning God created everything.” Or “In the beginning God created the Universe.”

I believe this even includes even the spiritual world – angles, seraphs, cherubs, and all the various powers & authorities & rulers in the heavenly realms.

The heavens are the abode of all those spiritual beings.

Isa.24:21 In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below.

Col. 1:16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

This is not a tertiary issue. It is an essential of the Gospel, that is, you cannot be saved unless you understand that God created all things. If you believe in a god who did not, that is a false god who cannot save you.

Jer.10:11 "Tell them this: "These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from

the earth and from under the heavens."

Every generation has found something in Gn.1 that they really can't swallow. For modern people it may be the days or the order. For the people to whom it was written, it was the radical, unacceptable idea of a single God who was separate from the creation.

That was extremely difficult for those people to accept.

The Hebrew's God is not a result of the creation, He is not a part of the creation, and He is not coexistent and coeternal with the creation.

Bruce Waltke: That view "distinguished Israel's faith from all other religions."

Have you ever wondered why Abraham got so excited about meeting Melchizedek?

Gn.14:17-24 After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). 18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. 20 And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything. 21 The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself." 22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath 23 that I will accept nothing belonging to you

Abram immediately recognizes this guy as a genuine priest, and Melchizedek recognized Abram as also being from God. What was the basis of their fellowship?

Look at the first thing Melchizedek says: **19 and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.**

Then look down at v.22 at Abram's comment to the king of Sodom: **Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth**

The basis for fellowship between Abram and Melchizedek was they both worshipped the Creator of heaven and earth. Back then that was unique. You find someone who worships a single God who is the creator of the heavens and earth, and you know you are dealing with a fellow believer, because that view was so unusual.

What is the significance of the fact that God made everything? If you look at references Scripture makes to the creation, one of the things you find is He did it to reveal Himself and to put on display things that are true of Him.

We call those the attributes of God. An attribute is anything that is true about God.

And the creation puts on display several of God's attributes. It doesn't really teach us about them (for that we need Scripture), but it does put them on display.

The naturalists, against all reason, cling to the ridiculous equation: nobody + nothing = everything.

But unless you have an extreme bias against God, it should be obvious even to the most limited intellect that everything had to come from some origin. And you can see some things that are true about that origin by examining the creation.

The two most obvious are His power and His wisdom.

Jer.10:12 God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

Jer.51:15 "He made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

The Power of God

Jer.32:17 "Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

We already understand the fact that God is infinitely powerful, but it helps us to look around, spend a half hour contemplating the force in a big river, or the vastness of the universe and to think that He just spoke in all into existence with a word!

Our thoughts about God's power can be correct, but can sometimes be so abstract that they don't have the effect on us that they do if they are accompanied by an illustration that can be experienced with the senses.

You might take a quiz and see the question, "God has limitless power" and mark "True," but it may not have the impact on your life that might come from being in your basement when a tornado passes over your house and blows away every last splinter.

Throughout history God's people have contemplated the creation and been reassured about God's power.

2Ki 19:14-16 Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. 15And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: "O LORD, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. 16Give ear, O LORD, and hear;

Isa 37:16-17 You have made heaven and earth. 17Give ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; listen

Ps 121:1-2 I lift up my eyes to the hills--where does my help come from? 2My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Ps 124:3-8 3...men attacked us...their anger flared against us, they would have swallowed us alive; 4the flood would have engulfed us, the torrent would have swept over us, 5 the raging waters would have swept us away...

8 Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth

Ps 146:5-6

Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, 6the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them

In Acts 4, the authorities captured Peter & John and flogged them. Then they told them to stop preaching and threatened them.

Ac 4:24-37 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ... 29Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.

We can't all get degrees in science, but to the extent we can we all ought to pursue a greater understanding of the creation.

If understanding the creation enables us to be encouraged by understanding God's power, the greater our understanding, the more encouraged we will be.

Some people see a river and all they see is a bunch of water. But after years of being a white water rafting guide, and seeing a wave flip a 2 ton boat into the air like a popsicle stick, or after being hit in the chest by a wave that felt like a baseball bat, I can watch a river and contemplate the power and be staggered by it.

The kinds of things that happen out in space are awesome beyond imagination. There was an explosion that happened in our own Milky Way Galaxy and became visible in the year 1054. The explosion was visible from earth and could be seen in the daylight for 23 days and at night for almost 2 years.

It can still be seen with a telescope. They call it the Crab Nebula and it's still expanding at the rate of 700 mi/second. The cloud of wreckage from that explosion is 10 light-years across.

If we reduced the universe down so the earth were right here, and the moon were 1/2 inch away, The Sun would be 15 ft. away, and the Crab Nebula would cover the entire United States.

[The Crab Nebula now appears to be 10 Light Years wide, (60 trillion mi.). It's 5000 light years away, so at the rate of 700 mi/sec that adds 1.84×10^{12} . That makes 6×10^{13} miles

Divide the feet to the moon by 3,168,000,000 to arrive at .04 ft.
Divide the feet of the nebula by 3,168,000,000 to arrive at 1950 miles]

It's impossible to fathom an explosion that big. But it's just a tiny blip in a single galaxy that is one of countless millions, and all that the Psalmist says is the work of His fingers. (Ps.8:3)

He made it all. Every star, every grain of sand, every galaxy, every molecule, every animal, every insect, everything.

And that gives us a reminder of His power that we can experience with our senses.

The other attribute that is emphasized in Scripture as being obvious from the creation is His Wisdom.

The Wisdom of God

You may not think this one is as obvious as the creation showing God's power, but in Scripture both are presented as being obvious parts of what we see about God in the creation.

As we make advances in science, the more we begin to understand the creation, the less we are able to fathom the incomprehensible wisdom required to create such wonders.

People in the ANE thought the creation was a fluke – it's just the result that happened to come from gods who were locked in deadly conflict with the forces of chaos. They struggled and fought, and this is what resulted – a place that is partially good and partially bad.

The modern myths run along the same line. This world is just the unintended consequence of natural forces interacting with each other. Natural forces collide and the result is a place that is part good and part bad.

It's exactly the same myth; the gods have just been replaced by the forces of nature (which, in the modern myth really are gods, because they act completely on their own and derive their power from no other source).

So God gave us Genesis to set the record straight. The universe is the beautiful and orderly product of the one wise, creative Mind. It was created only good, and was later altered.

Unlike the pagan god Marduk who needed the wisdom and guidance & council of his father Ea in order to effect the creation, Yahweh acted alone in His infinite intelligence, which is probably the very contrast Isaiah had in mind in .

Isa.40:13–14

(The NIV is much better than the NAS or the KJV here)

Who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counselor?

14Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way?

Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding (better skill)?

Proverbs 8 is an argument for why it is so important for us to pursue wisdom. It is very important to God that we become wise.

Starting in v.22 the writer uses a fascinating tactic. He tries to motivate us to pursue wisdom because of the role wisdom played in the creation. The point is, given the role wisdom plays in what God does, it should play a prominent role in what we do.

They way he shows this is by a figure of speech called "personification." That's when you apply the characteristics of a person to something that is not a person.

We use the same tool in English. "The bolt slipped out of my hand and decided to lodge itself in the middle of the engine where I can't reach it."

"My computer has gone insane."

"Baghdad is beginning to show signs of fear."

The point of this figure of speech is to say that if this non-person were a person, this would be how we would describe it.

Pr 8:22-31 **"The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old;
23 I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began.**

24 When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; 25 before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, 26 before he made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world. 27 I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, 28 when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, 29 when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.

Wisdom is not a creature. It is not a created thing. God didn't create His own wisdom. It's something He always had. The point of this is that if it were something He created, it would have had to be created before anything else, because it was there before anything else was.

In fact, not only was it there, but it was necessary for God to do the work of creating. Power alone can't do it. Every bit as crucial is wisdom.

30 Then I was the craftsman at his side.

Think of all the different systems and how they are so perfectly coordinated. The entire universe is one, giant, symbiotic relationship. Everything is dependent upon countless millions of other things.

Think of the intelligence required to coordinate all that.

This is an organizational chart with complexity beyond any organization we can imagine.

- They system of the sun on its surface, gravity, warmth, light and heat, thermonuclear fusion, etc.
- Perfectly interlocked with that is the earth's hydrology system.
- They system of the animal kingdom – the animals are dependent on the other animals for their existence.
- the ecosystem of a river
- the systems of humanity
- the moon and tides
- the rotation and revolution of the earth
- the atmosphere, oxygen, trees, animals.

The interdependence of the complex ecosystems of deserts, lakes, coral reefs, mountains, rain forests, ice caps, tundra, wetlands – each one an incredibly complex ecosystem and each of those systems functioning together globally.

The infinite genius that is displayed in the creation maxes out our ability to appreciate.

What a comfort it is when we are facing an impossible problem. When we have some ordeal that seems to us to be a mess so complicated it can't be sorted out.

What a comfort to be in the loving hands of a God who can figure that out just as easily as figuring 2+2.

It used to be believed that the most basic, simplistic building block of life was the cell. And the most simplistic of all the cells is the lowly bluegreen algae. They are about as simple as a self-sufficient cell can be.

It contains just a single molecule of DNA and lacks well-defined internal structures such as the nucleus.

And yet a bacterium of bluegreen algae can synthesize some 3000 to 6000 compounds at a rate of about 1,000,000 reactions per second.

That's a machine complex beyond anything man has ever dreamed of making.

But in the world God created that's as simple as it gets, and it becomes infinitely more complex from there when you contemplate a human cell – and then the arraignment of billions of those into a human being.

Think of the wisdom required just to come up with the diversity of the creation. Think of how many different things God thought of.

Think of how many different kinds of animals there are – 50,000 different species.

It's creative enough that God thought up the idea of birds. But that wasn't enough. Just the tiny island of Costa Rica has 830 different species of birds, and there is even diversity within each of those species – the individual birds have unique characteristics.

There are a million different species of insects. With all the millions of things God made, He wasn't satisfied – He had to add flatworms (just so there would be a little more diversity).

And He still wasn't satisfied, so He made 13,000 different species of flatworms.

Then you get into the plant world and the variety increases exponentially.

I'll never forget a program my dad and I watched once called "The Fungus Among Us."

They talked about all kinds of amazing different kinds of fungus, but the one that stuck in my mind was a kind of fungus that only lives in cows. It cannot reproduce anywhere else – only in a cow.

The problem is, it is eliminated from the cow and ends up in the cow pie.

Somehow it has to figure out a way to get back into the cow so it can continue to exist, which would be tough enough to figure out if it had a brain, but it doesn't.

What it does it form itself into a gun, and shoots its spores out of the cowpie and into the grass, so it will be eaten by another cow.

That may seem like an especially clever idea for a fungus, but there was a problem. Cows don't eat the grass too close to a cowpie, and so there is a ring of tall grass surrounding the pie.

This is called the "ring of repugnance."

So fungus is faced with the difficult problem of making sure it doesn't have its spores go flying into a blade of grass in the dreaded ring of repugnance, and be doomed to sit there and die while all the cows in the pasture ignore it.

But not to be outsmarted by a few repugnant blades of grass, the fungus wisely aims itself, by means of sunlight, in between the blades, and send the spores the appropriate distance and trajectory to land in nice, appetizing grass that the cow will gobble right up.

That's smarter than the average fungus.

And of course evolution and natural selection have no problem explaining that, because obviously fungi that, because of a random mutation, can form themselves into a gun that can shoot spores between tall blades of grass tend to survive, and the other ones die out.

If you happen to be a fungus that can only live in cows, you just hope you develop that mutation during your first generation. Otherwise it's all over for your species of fungus.

We see God's vast wisdom not only in the complexity of the creation, but also in its amazing variety.

What practical encouragement can we take from this?

There is a book in the Bible that in just one section has well over 3 times as much material about creation than Genesis 1&2 – the book of Job.

What do you do with someone like Job – someone who has lost everything, they are becoming cynical, demanding answers, someone who has reached the absolute bottom?

What's the best approach for dealing with someone like that?

God's approach was to talk about the creation for three straight chapters.

When Job came to the absolute end of his rope, God said, **Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation...** (Job 38:1)

And it all came in the form of rhetorical questions. God was saying, "Are you on a level to question my plan? Then surely you are powerful enough to pull off something like the creation."

"Surely you have the wisdom required to fully understand the all that is in the heavens and earth."

That was all Job needed to hear (brought him out of his depression. He realized God is wise and powerful and good beyond anything he could imagine, and God was not in need of Job's advice or council on how to run Job's life.

Job was demanding an answer - we do that when we lose sight of God's goodness and power and wisdom - Elihu (and then God) remind him that God is God. If you are at a level to question God's plan - if there is a hurricane hitting, and you are at a level so high that you can question God's wisdom, you must be at a level higher than God, so just go stop it.

If you don't have that much power, then remember the difference between your level of power and God's is the same as the difference between your level of wisdom and God's.

That goes for the rest of God's attributes as well.

For example, compassion. Next time you hear of some child abuse, and can't imagine how God could allow that in His perfect plan, and you get mad at God... Just remember, to the degree that His power outstretches yours, so does His love.

BENEDICTION: Eph.1:17-19 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Review Questions:

True or False?

You cannot be saved unless you understand that God created all things.

List two attributes of God that are obvious from the creation:

Power, wisdom, goodness